

# ***ARE WE REALLY FREE?***

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Are we really free? is the title that Liliana Moro chose for the course held at the Fondazione Ratti in 2012. Freedom is presented not as an affirmation but as a question, which verifies and ensures the absence and, perhaps, the impossibility of an answer. To paraphrase Jean-Luc Nancy, the artist shows freedom not as a concept, nor as a good or a value to own, but as an experience of which the complexity implies an opening that evades definitions and avoids systems.

I would have liked to write a lexicon for Liliana Moro, a kind of chronological dictionary for her work, but I realised that decoding her images is useless and ineffective. Her artistic career is not, and does not want to be, a linear structured path and, more importantly, does not require any systematisation, because it is an incessant and endless construction, where the protagonist is the freedom of action. With the same freedom I have identified some of the *elements* that recur in the work of Liliana Moro and on the texts about her work, creating a disorganised speech, deliberately fragmented.

Space

Liliana Moro is very sensitive to the physical and psychological space that her works inhabit and simultaneously activate by creating a different narrative according to the context of each installation.

20 years separate *Abbassamento* from *Moi*. Both works create spaces, never neutral, where the action, “the doing” of the viewer coincide exactly with a change of perspective. Liliana Moro is the first in her generation to point out the need to change the way of looking at things. With the reckless arrogance of youth, *Abbassamento* states this change and imposes its presence and

its point of view. *Abbassamento* neither tells the modernist metaphor of the supremacy of the work nor is it a playful allegory about the power of the gaze, but it builds a world that is other, which we can feel only by—literally—going on its level.

In *Moi* space opens, becomes accessible: a circular structure, firm and fragile at the same time, that contains without holding, where in the outer and the inner overlap in the sound of a voice. The subject does not need to assert itself anymore, nor does it need to define its own limits.

## Fragility

Is fragility a quality or a hindrance? The topography of associations of everyday objects and events deprived of their official status that composes Liliana Moro's works seems to indicate fragility as a necessary feature of the artwork. The 'inadequacy' of the technique and the fragility of the composition (as occurs in *Piazze* where formal language is reduced with a neutralising effect) seem to evoke an atmosphere simultaneously catastrophic and humorous, a sign of our uncertain time that cannot be traced back to a known situation or a specific event.

## Story

Between the late 80s and early 90s, many artists expressed a renewed interest in proximity, working on and between the aspects of everyday life, emphasising criticalities, giving generous space to subjectivity, their own and that of the audience. (...) During such a period, an aspect destined to leave a mark is the realisation that the everyday relationship with the 'real' could not be anything but filtered by the presence of mass media. The perception of the world and its stories had changed irreversibly. Debord had written long before on the society of the spectacle but, by comparison, what he observed was just an anticipation not yet real.

At some point it begins to be clear that the cost of this turn is a radical change of the way of experiencing reality, no matter how close or far. It can not be considered a direct answer, but not just a coincidence either, that so many artists then gave voice to fragility, a sense of helplessness and inadequacy, and distanced themselves from the grandiose spectacle deployed by mass media but without openly declaring war.<sup>1</sup>

## Sound

Art for Liliana Moro relates to intuition, experience and the pleasure of doing. From the beginning of her career, the artist has shown a particular ability to allow materials and things to communicate, using them as carriers of meaning and amplifiers of the emotional effect of the artwork. Even sound, a recurring element of her research, is for the artist a “simple working material”, a tool like others that puts us in relationship with the world.

Unlike other artists, Liliana Moro does not use sound as a caption or comment to an image (like a soundtrack), or as an indication of social practices. In her work it is the physical substance of sound that is the protagonist. Therefore, sound is a tangible element that builds or alters space and allows us to build images from scratch, to make us see the world in its absence, or as Nancy wrote: “The sonorous, on the other hand, outweighs form. it does not dissolve it, but rather enlarges it; it gives it an amplitude, a destiny, and a vibration or an undulation whose outline never does anything to approach.”<sup>2</sup>

### Inside/Outside

The interest in the relationship between inside and outside is an important aspect in the work of Liliana Moro. An interest that, especially in her early works, is formalised in the image of the house, understood as a metaphore of subjectivity and as a place where public and private overlap. The architecture, miniaturised and therefore completely under the domain of the eye, determines the mechanism of vision. It becomes the shifting limit that highlights the difference and the fading between inside and outside.

Resorting to images and everyday objects is not a sign of a strategy to ease the way leading to the work, it is rather a strategy that allows the image to be brought back to the world. It is the evidence, perhaps poetic but certainly not outdated, of the ability of art to allow real time and subjective time to coincide. It is the proof of our obstinate need to constantly re-establish the connection between inside and outside, mind and world, subject and object.

### Build the World/Build the Self

In his third novel *Stoner*, John Williams tells the story of William Stoner, a university researcher and the son of farmers: an ordinary life, quiet, without special events and without an apparent meaning. Yet, as the life is told on the page with “ruthless honesty”, you cannot take your eyes off the book, from those situations and the feelings that we empathise with because they echo

ours. It is not just the story that captivates us but also the rhythmic percision of the writing, the consion of each word that evokes the essence of reality. The deep simplicity of that atmosphere has something in common with some of the works that Liliana Moro has recently created. I am thinking of *Articolo I* ('48 UDHR; 2011) and *Maria* (2012), assemblages of objects that take shape from life experiences and, in turn, they themselves become life. These works show an irreducide and surprising sobriety, and unconventional ability to use—as Emanuela De Cecco correctly stated— “only what is strictly necessary”, which is a sign of a maturity that does not need to chase certainties. Like Stoner, Liliana Moro knows that, “While restoring the furniture and organising the room, it was himself who was slowly redesigned, it was himself who was put in order, it was himself who was given a chance.”

1. De Cecco, Emanuela, *Strettamente necessario*, in *Flash Art* 277, August-September 2009.
2. Nancy, Jean-Luc, *Listening*, Fordham University Press, 2007, p.2.